

## Historic Preservation Research Office

## Structure/Site Information Form

1  
IDENTIFICATION

Street Address: 18 N. 400 East  
Brigham City, Box Elder County, Utah UTM: 12 415880 4595760

Name of Structure: Box Elder High School Gymnasium T. R. S.

Present Owner: Box Elder School District  
230 West 200 South

Owner Address: Brigham City, Utah 84302

Year Built (Tax Record): Effective Age: Tax #: 03-102-0068  
Legal Description Kind of Building:

The building is located on a large parcel of land, upon which are several other school buildings which are not intended for inclusion in this nomination. The portion of that property upon which this building sits is the southern-most 150 feet of Block 82, Plat B, Brigham City Survey. Less than one acre.

2  
STATUS/USE

Original Owner: Box Elder School District Construction Date: 1934-35 Demolition Date:

Original Use: educational--school Present Use: educational--school

Building Condition: Integrity: Preliminary Evaluation: Final Register Status:

☒ Excellent ☐ Site ☐ Unaltered ☒ Significant ☐ Not of the ☐ National Landmark ☐ District  
☐ Good ☐ Ruins ☒ Minor Alterations ☐ Contributory Historic Period ☐ National Register ☐ Multi-Resource  
☐ Deteriorated ☐ Major Alterations ☐ Not Contributory ☐ State Register ☐ Thematic

3  
DOCUMENTATION

Photography: Date of Slides: 1984 Slide No.: Date of Photographs: 1984 Photo No.:

Views: ☐ Front ☐ Side ☐ Rear ☐ Other Views: ☐ Front ☐ Side ☐ Rear ☐ Other

## Research Sources:

☒ Abstract of Title ☒ Sanborn Maps ☒ Newspapers ☐ U of U Library  
☒ Plat Records/Map ☐ City Directories ☒ Utah State Historical Society ☐ BYU Library  
☒ Tax Card & Photo ☐ Biographical Encyclopedias ☐ Personal Interviews ☐ USU Library  
☐ Building Permit ☐ Obituary Index ☐ LDS Church Archives ☐ SLC Library  
☐ Sewer Permit ☒ County & City Histories ☐ LDS Genealogical Society ☐ Other

## Bibliographical References (books, articles, records, interviews, old photographs and maps, etc.):

Forsgren, Lydia Walker. History of Box Elder County. n.p., n.d.

Twenty-second Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Utah For the Biennial Period Ending June 30, 1936. Salt Lake City: 1936.

Street Address:

Site No:

Architect/Builder: Joseph Nelson/Bird Finlayson

Building Materials: brick

Building Type/Style: Art Deco

## Description of physical appearance &amp; significant architectural features:

(Include additions, alterations, ancillary structures, and landscaping if applicable)

The Box Elder High School Gymnasium is a good example of the Art Deco architectural style in Utah. The building is symmetrically composed, and has a central block that is 3-story high, and surrounded by a smaller 2-story front section and 1- and 2-story side wings. The various heights are all stepped back so that the building has the appearance of slowly receding back to its top level, or crown. The walls of the various sections are smooth red brick and the windows are arranged in sunken vertical panels. The piers separating the window strips project up past the edge of the flat roofs, thus giving the building a crenelated profile. Around and above the two main entrances there is zigzag ornamentation in contrasting grey cast concrete. There has been a c.1984 addition to the west end. This 1-story flat roofed, red brick addition, however, does not significantly detract from the historic integrity of the building.

## Statement of Historical Significance:

Construction Date: 1934-35

Built in 1934-35, the Box Elder High School Gymnasium is part of the Public Works Buildings Thematic Resources nomination and is significant because it helps document the impact of New Deal programs in Utah, which was one of the states that the Great Depression of the 1930s most severely affected. In 1933 Utah had an unemployment rate of 36 percent, the fourth highest in the country, and for the period 1932-1940 Utah's unemployment rate averaged 25 percent. Because the depression hit Utah so hard, federal programs were extensive in the state. Overall, per capita federal spending in Utah during the 1930s was 9th among the 48 states, and the percentage of workers on federal work projects was far above the national average. Building programs were of great importance. During the 1930s virtually every public building constructed in Utah, including county courthouses, city halls, fire stations, national guard armories, public school buildings, and a variety of others, were built under federal programs by one of several agencies, including the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the National Youth Administration (NYA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), or the Public Works Administration (PWA), and almost without exception none of the buildings would have been built when they were without the assistance of the federal government.

The Box Elder High School Gymnasium is one of 233 public works buildings identified in Utah that were built during the 1930s and early 1940s. Only 130 of the 233 buildings are known to remain today and retain their historic integrity. Of the 233 buildings, 107 of them were public school buildings; 55 of them remain. This is one of 20 gymnasiums built, of which 12 are left. In Box Elder County a total of 7 buildings were constructed, 5 of which are known to be extant. Of the 7 originally built, 4 were public school buildings and 3 of the 4 remain.

The gymnasium was built between 1934 and 1935 as a Public Works  
(See Continuation Sheet)

Box Elder High School Gymnasium  
History continued:

Administration (PWA) project at a cost of \$106,000. The architect was Joseph Nelson of Provo; the general contractor was Bird Finlayson, of Pocatello, Idaho; the superintendent of construction was James W. Askee of Salt Lake City; the building inspector was Varnick Hansen of Brigham City; the plumbing, heating, and ventilating contractor was Coleman and Sorensen of Brigham City; and the roofing and sheet metal contractor was Carl Seashore, also of Brigham City.

Construction of the building began November 2, 1934. It was completed in time for the opening of the school year the first part of September 1935 and dedicated on September 12. At its completion the entire building measured 185 feet by 126 feet. The interior was divided into 2 gyms, one for boys that measured 70 feet by 100 feet and had a seating capacity of 1000, and a much smaller one for girls that measured 40 feet by 70 feet and sat 50 people. Both had a "spring floor on which the basketball games and other indoor contests will be conducted." In addition to the boys' and girls' gyms, the building also had a swimming pool which measured 24 by 60 feet with a depth ranging from 4-1/2 feet to 8 feet and was "completely tiled." Surrounding the pool near the top was a "scum gutter." The building also had locker rooms for both males and females, classrooms, and a handball court.

The dedication ceremony featured a 30 minute band concert by the Box Elder High School Band; a speech by high school Principal F. A. Hinckley, in which he explained the Board of Education's duty to furnish the best school, buildings, and equipment for students; a brief response by Board of Education President John W. Peters; a financial report on the building program in the school district; a speech by Brigham City Mayor J. Wesley Horsley about the history of Box Elder High School focusing on the history of the school's athletic program; a short speech by student body president Cliff Hansen; a prayer from Clarence E. Smith, President of the L.D.S. Bear River Stake; and an introduction of guests, including Richard A. Hart, Utah State PWA Director; Kirk M. Decker, Assistant Utah State PWA Director; O. K. Clay, Utah State PWA Attorney; Taylor Chamberlain, Utah State PWA Finance Director; and architect Joseph Nelson.<sup>1</sup>

Architect of the building, Joseph Nelson, was a well-known Utah architect in practice in the state since about 1910. He was born in Mantua, Utah, in 1876, graduated from the Brigham Young College at Logan, taught school for about 5 years, and then studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. Following his graduation, he returned to Utah and practiced architecture until his death in 1952. Among the buildings he designed during his career were the Dixon Jr. High School in Provo, the Provo High School, the Utah County Building in Provo, the Taylor Brothers' Building in Provo, the Gerrit de Jong House in Provo, and a number of buildings on the Brigham Young University campus including Allen Hall, Amanda Knight Hall, the Heber J. Grant Library, and the President's Home.<sup>2</sup>

Notes

<sup>1</sup>The Box Elder News, September 13, 1935, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>"Joseph Nelson," Architects File, Preservation Office, Utah State Historical Society.